



Finish Well

Luke 14:28-30

By: Calvin Ray Evans

One of my dear preacher friends, Dr. Bob Hoots, was with me a few months ago in a service. As he was preaching, he paused and made a statement that seemed to pierce my heart. He has been in the ministry for over 60 years now and traveled this country preaching in some of the great camp meetings in America. However, he said, “As I near the sunset years of my ministry, there is one thing I desire more than ever before in my life. ***I just want to finish well.***” He went on to say that he did not want to grow bitter or become discontented in his final years of life. He wants to grow sweeter as the days go by. What a message in itself!

After hearing that statement, I seemed to think more and more about those that I know who have lost the desire to finish well. In fact, I think the world is filled with more “***quitters***” than “***over-comers***” today. Let me give you just a few examples to confirm my concern for a determined people to rise up in the church.

Have you ever made a commitment to do something and not followed through with it? As simple as it might seem, many have always wanted to read the Bible through entirely but somewhere along their journey they stop. We all know people who can’t hold a job for more than a year or two. After the newness wears off, they move on. It is almost like quitting is more

enjoyable than the work they accomplish. I know of people who can’t attend the same church for more than a year or two. They are not able to settle in a place when things get normal. They expect every service to be spectacular. However, we all know that we have more normal days than special days in our life. If every day were special then we would have no special days.

It is easier to start things than to finish them.

A couple can have a child but it takes a parent to raise the child. The birth is not the finished plan. It is only the beginning. I don’t like to see people start anything without the fortitude to finish it. If you lack that desire, then you can fall into a habitual lifestyle of never completing anything. The unfinished things in our lives bring frustration, intimidation and interruption to our purpose of serving God.

Nobody likes stuff hanging over his or her head. In fact, the Bible gives us great consolation in knowing that the Lord always finishes what He begins. He is the “***Author***” and the “***Finisher***” of our faith. He is the ***Alpha*** and the ***Omega***. He is the ***beginning*** and the ***end***. Therefore, He gives us some simple instructions in His Word to help us finish well!

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One thing we should always remember in our journey of faith is to finish our course in steps. A baby does not start eating meat or walking in the first day of life. There is a process of life. We finish all great projects by taking them one step at a time. I was hospitalized a little over a year ago for blood clots and diabetes. The doctor told me I

had to lose weight. I knew there was a need to lose at least 75 pounds. In all fairness, I did not gain that excessive weight in a week or a month. I had gained the weight over 25 years. So I knew to be successful I did not need to lose 75 pounds to start with. I set a goal of losing 10 pounds. I developed a plan to follow through in a process where I could rejoice in phases of completion. In time, I will reach the final goal but in the meantime I move toward the ultimate finish line.

The same plan I followed physically to reach the goal can also be applied spiritually. The Lord shows us in the creation process that He took five days to make this world in steps. Then on the sixth day He created man. After each step of the process was completed then He told us in His Word that it was good. In other words, ***praise God for each step you complete by His grace.*** You are not finished yet but you are still moving toward His final plan. So take things in steps and rejoice when you finish each phase. Don't try to pay all your debts off at once. Pay the smallest debt off first. Then apply that payment to the next debt and so on. Before you know it you will cross the finish line and you are able to praise the Lord for His help through the entire process. Finish it in steps.

Second, ***finish YOUR course!*** You can't finish another person's course. The Apostle Paul wrote, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith...*" (II Timothy 4:7). He did not run the course of another person. God wants you. He has something in His purpose that only you can do. Contrary to popular preaching and teaching, ***life gets tougher as you get older.*** You are not taught calculus in the first grade. ***A mountain is wider at the bottom than it is at the top.*** The closer you get to the top then the steeper the climb might be. Always remember, this is your course and you must finish it for the glory of God. No matter how much sorrow you face, how sad you become or how sick you are ~ just finish your course. There is a beautiful passage of Scripture which says, "*...As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" (Deuteronomy 33:25). You may face hard days but He gives you strength for the day. He will always give beauty for your

ashes. However, ***the only way you have ashes to offer Him is to go through a fire.***

Finally, there is a simple fact that we all must face when we come to the end of our course. ***We will be able to see further than we can go.*** Our vision should be greater than our days. When Paul said he finished his course that did not mean the entire world had been saved. There were still great numbers of lost people in the world at that time. He is a great example of how our course is finished but the work of God is not. We go to meet the Lord but God's program still goes on. I love working for God but I must always remember His plan does not rest entirely on me! ***Never get to the point where you feel that the church can't make it without you.*** If I die today, I promise you they will still have church on Sunday. I am honored to be a part of the pattern but I am not the entire ingredient in His plan.

When I was in school, I used to run in a lot of relay races. For some reason, it seemed like I always got stuck running the third leg of the four-man relay team. The total distance of the race was one mile. Each runner had to race a quarter of the mile. When the runner came toward you in the race, you had to find his rhythm so he could easily pass the baton on to you. Once I had the baton in my hand then I was determined to run as though my life depended on it. However, not one time did I get to cross the finish line. ***I could always see the finish line but never got to personally cross it.*** I was not supposed to cross it. My job was to pass the baton on to the next runner. We were a team. If we won the race, no one man could take the glory for himself. It was a team effort. When we won, the team won.

Moses, the servant of the Lord, was on top of Mount Nebo. The Lord allowed him to see a promised land that his foot could not touch before he died. He saw further than he could travel right then. He saw with his eyes what he could not walk in. By the way, he did not possess the land but the people he led did! ***We may not be able to do all we want but may we all finish well and may our vision be greater than our days!***

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